

602 subcaste assembly to discuss the case and take
613 appropriate action. Until this was done, they
621 might not resume their ties or attend ceremonies
of the offending lineage. The enangar thus formally represented the local subcaste group to the individual lineage.

613 Enangar played their most important role at
881 the initiation rites of the girls of a linked lineage.
836 Every ten to twelve years, each lineage held a
581 grand ceremony in its oldest ancestral house,
at which all immature girls of the lineage were
on one day ritually "married" by men of enangar
groups. This ceremony, called talikettukalya-
nam (tali-tying marriage) (3) must be performed
for each girl before puberty on pain of her ex-
communication from caste. Before it took place,
elders of the subcaste assembly selected suitable
young men of the enangar lineages as ritual
bridegrooms for the girls. At the ceremony,
each ritual bridegroom, in the company of rep-
resentatives of every lineage in the kara, tied
a gold ornament (tali) round the neck of his cho-
sen "bride." After this each couple was seclud-
ed in a room of the ancestral house for a period
of four days and nights during which, if the girl
were old enough, cohabitation might take place.
At the end of the four days, the couples were
again led before the assembled company where
each tore in two the loincloth worn by the girl
during the period of seclusion. They were then
581 considered ritually divorced and had no further
613 practical obligations to each other. The girls
885 were now regarded as having attained the status
of mature women, ready to bear children to
perpetuate their lineage.

58/ perpetuate their lineage. Shortly before or after
613 puberty, they might, following this ceremony,
enter without religious rites into sexual liaisons
621 (called sambandham - "joining together") with
58/ one or more men of their own or an appropriate
613 higher subcaste, including, if they wished, the
man who had tied the tali. These men visited
them in their natal houses at night. Similarly a
Nayar man, (whether or not he had ever perform-
ed a tali-rite) might enter into relationships
with any number of women of his own or an
appropriate lower subcaste. These marital
customs are further discussed below: here it
is relevant to point only to the role of the enan-
gar bridegroom. Since the enangar stand to the
lineage as formal representatives of the local
subcaste group, it seems appropriate to inter-
pret the tali-rite as a ceremony at which the [46]
subcaste group as a whole "married" the imma-
ture girls of the lineage as a whole, and ritually
set free their procreative powers for the per-
petuation of their lineage. It was also signifi-
cant in that it appears that in general among the
Nayars, enangar relationships between lineages
(i. e., hereditary intergroup relationships) ful-
filled the functions of integrating the total local
community which in many unilineal systems
(e. g., the patrilineal system of the lower castes)
are fulfilled by interpersonal cognatic and affinal
ties. This was possible, and necessary, be-
cause the marital tie was so weak among Nayars
that all the interpersonal kinship ties between
individuals of different lineages were also in-
sufficiently stable to carry these functions of
ritual and other social cooperation.

592 with their parents into any convenient vacant
[582] room. At the same time, the separate, unique
role of each woman as potential founder of a
new taravad is recognized in certain rules: both
sororate and sororal polygyny are traditionally
forbidden, for example, since the inter-personal
unity between sisters, as well as their separate
positions each at the head of a line of
matrilineal descendants, must not be endangered
or distorted by their extra-lineage ties.

592 [72] (2) The Traditional Institution of Marriage.

581 Consistent with the unity and multiplex economic, legal and ceremonial functions of the taravad as a corporate group, marriage was traditionally the slenderest of ties, while as a social concept fatherhood scarcely existed. We
592 have mentioned already that at the tali-rite of
582 retainer, middle class and servant Nayars and
608 of temple servants, the immature girls of a lineage were collectively "married" and divorced before puberty by their local caste group as a whole, represented by their individual enangar. In desavari, chiefly and royal lineages the tali was usually tied by a man of a higher sub-caste from which the lineage was wont to draw lovers for its women in hypergamous liaisons. The women of desavari lineages were thus usually "married" by naduvvari men, naduvvari and royal women either by Nambudiri men or by men of some higher-ranking royal lineage more ancient than their own. In all castes, the tali-tier had no subsequent responsibilities and if he wished need never visit the woman again.

MAN-SISTER

593 Within the kinship circle, a man's concern for his sisters should come second only to that for his mother. He had greater authority over them, but he owed them similar protection and consideration. If he became their kārānavan, he must manage the property on their behalf and educate their children to the best of his ability. A woman owed her brother domestic services, obedience, and devotion. Brother and sister should, when necessary, subordinate their own marital interests to each other's comfort and welfare.

593 The elder sister shared something of the mother's role; the younger sister, that of the sister's daughter. Indeed, as in all relationships within the taravād, the significance of age surpassed that of generation; for when age and generation were discrepant the attitudes appropriate to age overrode those appropriate to generation.

561 A much older sister might help to bring up a boy in the same manner as the mother's younger sister. As he grew to maturity her attitude combined sharp criticism with maternal solicitude. When both were adult, however, difference of sex became a greater determinant of authority than did difference of age. Although she might continue to speak informally with him or even to upbraid him mildly, the elder sister stood in her brother's presence and received his commands with respect. If he became kārānavan, the younger brother's ultimate legal authority was unquestioned. His sister might, however, remain his trusted counselor for life.

[588] Until her tāli rite a girl played freely with her elder brothers and was affectionately patronized by them. After this time an outer formality was required between them, identical with that preserved toward the sister's daughter. Inwardly the relationship was expected to be more intense, with less authority and more tenderness on the part of the brother, less fear and more devotion on the part of the sister, and today, in speech with others, young childless women often display a simple hero worship for their elder brothers. As a woman's children grew to maturity, her brother's discipline of them might create tensions in the sibling relationship. She should, however, continue to submit willingly to his wishes. A man who was not her kārānavan had no right to dismiss his sister's husband from their home. Nevertheless, a woman who knew that her brother deeply disliked her husband would feel it her duty to reject him.

593 The very formal behavior required between a man and his younger sister is consciously related to incest prohibitions. Sibling incest is 835 in fact very rare and was traditionally punished by death. Enough

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own daughters and grandchildren, but sisters "stood in" for one another in caring for their children and contributed their work in a manner conducive to the general welfare. 593
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Between sisters, especially own sisters, there was deep personal affection as well as loyalty to the sibling group and to the taravād. Sisters were also rivals, often squabbling over jewelry, clothing, and favors. Both rivalry and affection were most intense between sisters close in age. 593 [578]

Most women died in their ancestral homes among their siblings and children. Only a woman whose forebears and brothers were all dead might move away from her sisters into a separate property group headed by her son as karanavan. Even so, sisters often lived to experience covert disputes between their children, who looked forward to the day when they would separate into new branch taravāds. In the last resort sisters would support their own children in quarrels, although they tried not to become involved in such disputes but to preserve their mutual amity. [578]

MARRIAGE

The taravād was obviously of very great strength as an economic and legal corporation. Correspondingly, marriage was the slenderest of ties. 613
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Every ten or twelve years, the immature girls of one generation within a lineage were ritually married on the same day by men drawn from their enangar lineages. Before the ceremony the girls were secluded for three days and caused to observe ritual prohibitions as if they had menstruated. (The actual rite of tying the tāli or gold ornament around the bride's neck is the central rite of "normal" marriage among most of the patrilineal castes of South India.) After the tāli rite, each couple was secluded for three days in a room of the ancestral house. Their seclusion clearly marked a ceremonial if not an actual defloration, and travelers' accounts of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries indicate that the brides were actually deflowered at this time (Stanley, 1865: 24; Kerr, 1811: chap. 6; Hamilton, ed. Penzer, 1930, I: 174). During the seclusion period, rites were performed to the goddess Bhagavadi to enhance the girls' fertility. On the fourth morning each couple took a purifying bath and ate a meal together. In Calicut and Walluvanad, although apparently not in Cochin, each bridegroom then tore in two the lower cloth worn by the girl in the period of seclusion. He kept one half and handed the other to the girl. Their personal obligations ended, the bridegrooms left the household. 613
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[585]
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Kathleen Gough

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754 particular marriage, for the spouses, unable to bear the machinations of their relatives, would often end their relationship.

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586 I have called these Nayar institutions "marriage" because they limited and regulated sexual relationships and because they served to legitimize children. The provisions of both the tāli rite and the sambandham were directed toward these ends. The tāli rite was both a legal and a ritual institution. First, it symbolically conferred sexual and procreative powers upon the girl. The mock menstrual seclusion, the rites to the fertility goddess, and the "defloration" all indicate this.

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588 Second, it took the sexual rights in a girl away from her matrilineal kinsmen as soon as they had been conferred. This appears in that the [835] girl and her elder matrilineal kinsmen must observe the rules of etiquette associated with incest prohibitions from the day of the tāli rite. Third, it transferred the sexual (but not the procreative) rights in the girl to a representative of her caste in the person of an enangan. Fourth, however, this man at once renounced his rights in his capacity as an individual, after which they became available to men of the caste, and of appropriate higher castes, as a group. All of this was accomplished in good time before the girl actually attained puberty and was capable of entering fruitfully into sexual liaisons. It [834] was strictly forbidden for a man to have relations with a girl before her tāli rite, and if the rite was not performed before puberty she was expelled from caste.

595 With regard to the sambandham institution, sex relations were not promiscuous. They were forbidden within the lineage, within a certain range of affines (discussed below), and, most categorically, 834 with men of lower caste. It was therefore necessary to have some procedure for legitimizing children, to show that they had been fathered by men standing in the appropriate roles. The legally obligatory payments by husbands at the time of birth accomplished this, and if no one could be found to make the payments, the woman and child were expelled from the caste.

595 It was appropriate that a woman should wear the tāli throughout her life and that she and her children should observe death pollution for the ritual husband rather than for any particular visiting husbands. [765] For neither the ritual husband nor the visiting husbands had rights [783] in the woman as individuals, nor had the woman or her children individual rights in them. After renouncing his individual rights, however, the ritual husband remained for life, in relation to this woman, [564] the representative of his caste, which in law had collectively married her and collectively fathered her children.

As a form of group marriage, the Nayar institutions clearly will not fit the definition of marriage proposed in *Notes and Queries in Anthropology*.⁹ It did, however, legitimize children, which seems to me the minimum necessary criterion applicable to all those unions which anthropologists customarily label "marriage." As a new definition of marriage which will cover all the familiar types, the Nayar case, and several other unusual cases which are commonly recognized as marriage, I have suggested the following: "Marriage is a relationship between a woman and one or more other persons which provides that a child born to the woman, under circumstances not prohibited by the rules of the relationship, shall be accorded full birth-status rights in his society or social stratum" (Gough, 1959: 32).

Nayar men seem always to have chosen wives younger than themselves. A man ranked above his wife, who had to show respect to him. In the presence of her kin she remained standing before him and seldom spoke to him; she would not be seen talking to him in public outside her home. A woman never used her husband's name; she addressed and referred to him by plural honorific pronouns. Hypergamous marriage relationships were even more formal than those between Nayars. Caste rules of pollution prevented the husband from receiving food from his wife's kinsfolk. During the daytime, after taking his purifying bath in the morning, he was forbidden to touch her or any member of her family.

THE FATHER AND HIS KIN

The most peculiar characteristic of the Central Nayars is that although a form of marriage existed they did not institutionalize the elementary family of one man, one woman, and their children. This group was in no sense a legal, residential, commensal, productive, or distributive unit. An individual man had no legal rights in a particular wife and her children. He did not reside with them, did not eat regularly with them, did not produce with or for them, and he did not customarily distribute goods to his children. A woman had no legal rights in a particular man—only the right that one or more men admit paternity of her children. Similarly, a child correctly begotten was assured of legal paternity, but a group of men might fulfill this role and the child had no subsequent claims on any of them. It might perhaps be claimed that the group composed of the tāli tier, his ritual wife, and her children born subsequently received cere-

⁹ "Marriage is a union between a man and a woman such that children born to the woman are the legitimate offspring of both parents" (*Notes and Queries*, 1951: 110).

A man's relationships with his wife's older matrilineal kinswomen were less formally respectful. He might sit with them and exchange village news. They served food to him when he ate in their house and were the persons who usually greeted him first on an evening visit. Although she welcomed them at first out of pride in her daughter's popularity, a woman was likely in time to become jealous of her sons-in-law. If they were tactful they treated her with courtesy and submitted to her whims. 602 [806]

A man tended to avoid his wife's sisters or classificatory sisters who were younger than himself. They treated him with extreme respect similar to that accorded to an older brother, and avoided him as far as possible after they had reached puberty. Incest prohibitions were relevant here: a man was forbidden to have marital relations with two women of the same household, and a woman, with two men from the same household. These prohibitions of course partly served to prevent father-daughter incest. Marriage to a member of a dead or divorced spouse's household was also forbidden. 607 [835] [582]

These rules in general appear to relate to the need to keep minimal potential rivalries between persons of the same sex within the matrilineal household. They were also consistent with the relationship of extreme respect and social distance between the men of a taravād. Tensions between these men were sufficiently acute in any case; they might have been intolerable if two of them had shared a wife. There was also the attitude that sexual relationships should be kept strictly segregated from ties to matrilineal kin. A boy's matrilineal kinsmen were even forbidden to accompany him to his bride's house at the beginning of his first sambandham. Instead he took with him brothers-in-law, unrelated friends, or sometimes a cross-cousin. For marriage was a gay undertaking, a matter of personal pleasure, and only men who stood to each other in a familiar and non-authoritative relationship might have knowledge of each others' marital affairs. 602 578 [834] [581]

Similarly, the ban on marriage to two women of the same property group is understandable in that Nayar women were open rivals for the attentions of men. Many writers mention this and it is still discernible at the present day. Apparently the respect and amity required of women of the same household was incompatible with such rivalry. 602 572

However, the prohibition of relations with two members of the same property group was less stringent than the rule of lineage exogamy. Nambudiri Brahmans are said to have occasionally pressed their attentions on two sisters in spite of their family's reluctance. 835

(60) corrupted to *chēdatti amma* (Cochin) or *eratti amma* (S. Malabar).
(9) *Chētan*. M. and F. speaking, reference; M. speaking only, address. A particular shortened form of *fyēshtan* (ElBr), reserved for the husband of A6.

(10) *Makan*. M. speaking. Son of ego's wife. Reference only.

(11) *Makal*. M. speaking. Daughter of ego's wife. Reference only.

(12) *Pērakutti*. M. speaking. Child of ego's wife's daughter. Reference only. Not always used.

(13) *Appan*. M. and F. speaking. Ritual husband (*tālī tier*) of ego's mother.

(14) *Manavalan*. F. speaking. Ritual husband. Reference only.

All other affines and cognates were referred to by descriptive compound terms (e.g., *ende acchande marumakan*, "my father's nephew"; *ende anujande bhārya*, "my younger brother's wife"). Persons of 8 and 9 were also often referred to by descriptive compound terms.

(60) A man might address his wife's matrilineal kin older than himself
(602) by the same terms as she did but he was not obliged to do so. He

[55] might also address them by their names and caste titles. They ad-
[54] dressed him by his personal name, adding the caste title if he were of higher caste.

A man addressed his wife's younger matrilineal kinsmen by name. Because of the avoidance relationship he and his wife's younger sisters used no terms or names to address each other.

If she knew them and was of the same caste as they were, a woman addressed her husband's older matrilineal relatives by the same terms as he did. She addressed by name those younger than herself. She called her husband's younger sister who was older than herself *fyēsh-tatti*, (elder sister). Because of the avoidance relationship no terms or names were used between a woman and her husband's brothers who were older than she.

In hypergamous marriages a woman and her husband's natal kin used no terms to address each other.

An individual used no terms, but only names, to address his father's matrilineal kin.

(60) Comment: In general, the restricted use of reference terms for
[54] affines and the lack of terms for patrilineal kin other than the father reflect the slenderness of the marriage tie and the lack of obligations to these kin.

Affinal terms were mainly restricted to the spouses of ego's older matrilineal kin, persons with whom he had fairly regular contact. Even these, however, might be referred to by descriptive compound

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837 should be no such thing as chastity excepting amongst the Brāhman women. And the Kolatūr Vāriyār, a great personage: "A woman is not forbidden from consorting with more than one man. For the Marumakkatāyam people, who reckon their descent in the female line, there is no objection to any cohabitation which does not contaminate the female element."

• 581 The opinions which have been quoted are those of persons of the highest position, principals of the oldest families, and give expression to the old-fashioned Malabar custom which they would be the last to condemn. But it must not be imagined that the goddess Lubricity reigns supreme in Malabar. It seems perhaps to have been indicated that she does. Such is, however, not the case. It has been said by one whose long acquaintance with Malabar gives him what we may call admitted right to express authoritative opinion, that, "nowhere else is the marriage tie more jealously guarded, and its breaches more savagely avenged." We shall know more of the subject presently, when we have done with all that pertains to formal union between the sexes. As a matter of fact lubricity has no more followers in Malabar than elsewhere.

585 The ceremonies surrounding marriage and death seem to be those in which human feelings are deepest, and
764 consequently in these, more than in any others, we see
182 relics of a long gone past; much of the ceremonial being now apparently meaningless, and handed on after the manner of all ceremonial, for no obvious purpose, long after the original signification has been forgotten. Amongst all races of the world it is the same. These form perhaps—for the ceremonies connected with death are interwoven with primitive religious ideas—the closest links between our earlier ancestors and ourselves. The institution marriage itself is not easily liable to change or even modification, and thus it is, perhaps, that it, the product of a bygone age, is not always suited to the wants of the age in which it is found. It is rarely up to date. It is invariably blended with superstitions and restraints which people believe they believe; and the relations between the sexes are rarely natural, *i.e.*, rarely free from restraints which are souvenirs of the past, and which are resented in the present. Of course amongst primitive peoples changes in respect of marital connexions, as also in respect of death ceremonies, are imperceptible. They must be very small indeed in even an immense period; and in their case there is not that

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lives in the house with her husband. A point to be noted in this connection is that, when her husband dies, she must leave his house and return to her own at once, before his body is carried out. According to the Kērala Māhātmyam the women in North Malabar (should) live with but one man at a time.

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We still, after the manner of children, confound words with things, so it is not surprising that the unfortunate Commission arrived at the conclusion that the institution of marriage was and is entirely alien to the Marumakkattāyam system. "The parties do not plight troth, and do not call God to witness their union." And so forth. But with this conclusion, suitable enough to the high-flown moralist or to the restless beings who would regardlessly sweep away the long results of time and improve on the process of natural development, imposing fanciful arrangements of their own, the anthropologist cannot at all agree. The Sambandham, a regularly formed, and certainly not haphazard alliance between a man and a woman, having the full sanction of the community, is marriage in every sense of the word. If the tāli-tying ceremony gave the girl free liberty, we might well suspect that the Sambandham followed a ceremony, not a marriage ceremony. But such is by no means the case. For, should the woman who is unmarried, for whom Sambandham has not been arranged, or whose husband, the man with whom she had had Sambandham, is dead—there is no such thing as widowhood,—bear a child, she is disgraced, much as is the Brāhman widow under the same circumstances.

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What then is the meaning of the assertions of the exponents of the orthodox view that the woman need not be chaste; and so on? The question is not an easy one to answer, but I think we may say with confidence that this orthodox view has been, in some measure, propounded by the Nambūtiris for their own gratification.

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I have myself known several tragedies arising out of unfaithfulness, and I believe the old fashioned code of custom admitted the right of the husband to kill his wife's lover if he could, and also to kill his wife. No doubt in a great many cases the pair bound together in Sambandham lead lives ordinarily chaste. I do not, however, think that in actuality such is the rule with either party any more than it is in any other community, and sexual affairs are often treated lightly. With taste and consideration too, Hamilton, who arrived at Calicut in 1702, and spent some twenty odd years on the coast,

writes thus in speaking of the Nāyars:—"When the man visits the woman he lays down his arms at the door; but, if there are no arms at the door, any acquaintance may visit her. To visit the house when there are arms at the door, or remove them, is death." Now-a-days a man leaves his shoes outside the door. Equality of the sexes in all sexual matters, the man and woman being on terms of equality, having equal freedom, is certainly an uncommon merit in the Marumakkattāyam system. Either party may terminate the union—even after one night of hymeneal bliss; and those who are unsuited to each other sexually, or in the way of temperament, in fact in any way, may put an end to their union and turn towards other partners. It may be thought that this liberty induced perpetual change, so it is as well to state here that it does nothing of the kind. Mere arbitrary divorce is very rare. Permanent attachment is the rule. The basis of the system seems to be that the Taravād estate is held in trust for the support of the females and of their descendants in the female line. This trust is placed in the hands of the Kāranavan, the senior male member of the Taravād who is the legal guardian of every member of it, and whose control of the Taravād property is absolute. The odd feature in the Marumakkattāyam system is that a man has his nephews about him in the house, and not his sons. He lives in one house, while his wife and family live in another. That is, in South Malabar; in North Malabar they live together.

When we come to consider the relationship within which marriage is prohibited, we find the rule is that persons descended from a common female ancestor are not at liberty to marry. Those of the same Taravād can never intermarry; but this prohibition does not of course extend to the children of a brother and a sister, who are naturally of different Taravāds. Again, the principle that "no member of the Taravād of a deceased wife or husband (is) eligible as the second wife or husband is true only as far as the woman is concerned; for a man may marry a woman of his deceased wife's Taravād. But he who does this is not in harmony with social sentiment." We find this observance amongst the forest Mūppans of Wynād. In the case of a man's wife dying, I found that a Mūppan could not take another wife from her family.

The rule does not interfere with union between the children (or their descendants) of a brother and sister

Nayar

FEMALE INITIATION RITES ON THE MALABAR COAST

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much the same part as did its maternal and affinal kinsmen to a patrilineal lineage in the lower castes. Individual *enagar* were moreover often of course affines (*bendhus*) to members of the lineage. But among Nayars, the marriage-tie was so slender that individual affinal bonds were not, it seems, strong enough to unite the lineage to the rest of the sub-caste group. This was achieved instead by a hereditary relationship between lineages as groups, which persisted irrespective of the making and breaking of marriage ties between them.

In these retainer sub-caste groups the *tdli* must be tied by an *enagan*. Each girl had a separate bridegroom, usually a youth who might have already formed *sambandham* relationships of his own. The *tdli*-tiers were chosen at a local assembly. The choice was made by the village astrologer, who compared the horoscopes of the girls with those of suitable young men and fixed the auspicious date and time for the ceremony to take place.

In Kiriyaatil, Samantan, and royal lineages, whose women frequently or invariably married men of higher sub-caste, the *tdli*-tier was chosen from the appropriate higher sub-caste. Women of village headmen's lineages were commonly 'tied' by men of their district headman's lineage, and Samantan women and Cochin princesses by Nambūdiri Brahmans. Calicut princesses had the *tdli* tied by men of Kodungalur, one of the ancient ruling lineages which had been conquered by Calicut. Similarly, Walluvanād princesses had the *tdli* tied by men of the lineage of Beypore, a more ancient and therefore higher-ranking lineage than their own of an adjacent small kingdom which was also feudatory to Calicut. In these sub-castes the 'bridegroom' was usually an elderly man.

The account which follows was given by Sūdra Nayars of Pālakkara, the Cochin village where I worked. In Pālakkara, the *tdli*-rite in its full form has not been performed for twenty-two years, and, like many of the traditional rites of Nayars, it is doubtful if it will ever be performed again. This description refers to this most recently held ceremony, at which the *tdlis* were tied for nineteen girls, ranging in age from two to twelve, of a lineage comprising twelve property-groups.

The ceremony required the co-operation of the whole village, which at that time was coterminous with the *tara*. It was held in the lineage's oldest ancestral house. A shed of bamboo and palm-fronds was erected before the house, the first corner-post, of areca-palm wood, being planted ceremonially by the carpenter. A man of the temple-servant caste of Kurups drew a picture of the Malabar goddess Bhagavadi on the floor of the shed, of the type drawn in the village Bhagavadi temple at festivals to the goddess. Nayar men of the village then went and cut down a branch of the milk-exuding tree of Bhagavadi from near the village temple. This they planted near the corner-post in the floor of the shed, in order, informants said, 'to bring Bhagavadi to the *tara* and set up a temple in the house'. A plank of wood of the same tree was set in the shed for each girl to sit on in turn.

All *enagar* of the lineage, and representatives of every other Nayar house in the village, attended the four days of ceremonies. On the first morning, the girls went in procession to the shrine of the lineage's *dharma devi* (goddess of moral law). This goddess, represented by a stone image, is the lineage's private Bhagavadi. She is propitiated annually with cooked food to ward off sickness and misfortune. Similar offerings were made now, and the procession returned. Young men of the lineage then went to meet the bridegrooms, who arrived on elephants with their male age-mates, accompanied by music. At the gate married women of the lineage met them carrying brass plates each containing a lit wick, paddy, rice, and a spray of coconut flowers. The bridegrooms' feet were washed by brothers of the girls and they were seated in the marriage-shed. Near the picture of Bhagavadi were laid paddy and rice, coconut flowers, the sacred brass lamp of the household, and a tray of eight auspicious objects (*ashimangalyam*). These included a woman's loin-cloth, a rouge-box, a bell-metal mirror, an arrow, a coconut-spray, rice, paddy and a lit wick; they figure also in the Nambūdiri

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Tiyyar

[North Malabar]

POLYANDRY IS FORBIDDEN
FEMALE INITIATION RITES ON THE MALABAR COAST

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polygyny more common than among Nayars. Symmetrical cross-cousin marriage is encouraged, the mother's brother's son being the rightful husband of a girl. Divorce, however, appears to be much more common than among Nayars and the domestic group less stable, especially in poor families.

For the post-puberty marriage ceremony the bridegroom comes with his parents and elders to the house of the bride. This contrasts with Nayar marriage, where the youth is accompanied by age-mates, the father and maternal uncles being prohibited from attending. This difference reflects the fact that despite virilocal residence and the comparative infrequency of divorce, North Malabar Nayar marriage is theoretically, as in the south, a contract between individuals as sexual partners and not between lineages. Moreover, the absence of the maternal uncles reflects the sexual jealousy between proximal generations in a Nayar lineage. Among Tiyyars, marriage is primarily a contract between families, a domestic arrangement for procuring food and bringing up children, as well as a sexual tie. The bridegroom's father and *karanavan* jointly give gold to the goldsmith who makes earrings for the bride and places them in the tops of her ears. These rings are the mark of a married woman and are removed at divorce or death.

The feast at the bride's house is paid for jointly by the two parties. After it is over, the bridegroom's *karanavan* pays a bride-price in *panams* (old-fashioned Malayali coins) to the *karanavan* of the bride. This sum is called *kdam*, the word used for the sum paid by a Nayar or Tiyyar tenant to his landlord at the start of a period of tenure, nowadays fixed at twelve years. The interest on the *kdam* sum is then set off against the annual rent, and returned to the tenant if the property is returned at the end of the stipulated period. The Tiyyar marriage is thus, as Aiyappan (1944, p. 91) says, 'in theory a temporary depositing of a girl by her natural guardian amidst another group from whom a security is received and also an undertaking to take care of her'. The bride's party in return pay a dowry of jewellery and vessels. The bridegroom presents one loin-cloth to the bride and another to her mother. The couple are blessed by elders and depart to the bridegroom's house.

The Tiyyar marriage, therefore, is better defined legally than the Nayar. The *kdam* sum (which is of nominal value, in Kottayam fixed at 134 *panams* or 3 to 5 rupees¹ and paid in the old coins long after their use as currency died out) is, it seems, a symbolic purchase of the husband's *ius in uxorem*. While this persists, he must maintain his wife. Should he lose it by the wife's adultery, his *kdam* sum is returned and his wife goes home with her dowry. In theory, he does not acquire *ius in genitricem* in his wife: this, as in all matrilineal societies, remains with her natal kin. Similarly, the father need not by law maintain his children, though he often does so in fact. These may at any time be returned to their *karanavan*.

The Tiyyar Tali-Rite. Since the Tiyyar tali-rite died out about twenty years ago, it has been better described in previous literature than by my own informants. I therefore summarize Anantha Krishna Iyer's (1909-12, I, p. 288), Thurston & Rangachari's (1909, VII, pp. 77-9) and Aiyappan's (1944, pp. 159-62) accounts, and then add that of my informants.

The rite must be performed before puberty, on pain of disgrace to the girl's family, and, in ancient times, excommunication from caste. The day was fixed by the astrologer and the ceremony held in the girl's matrilineal ancestral house. The girl was taken to the middle room of the house and secluded for three days as if she had menstruated. Like a menstruous woman, she must abstain from meat and condiments and must not see a tree, a plant, a man, a crow, a dog, or a cat. On the fourth day she bathed in the local pool. At the pool, her brother planted an arrow with its point up, to drive away evil spirits. After bathing, the girl cut a

¹Thurston & Rangachari report that the north Malabar *kdam* sum is 41 *panams*; Aiyappan, however, places it between 11 and 20 *panams*. In Kottayam the bridegroom's mother's brother gives 114 *panams* to the bride's mother's brother and 2 *panams* to her mother's brother's wife.

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[South Malabar and Cochin]

FEMALE INITIATION RITES ON THE MALABAR COAST

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presence of *mangar*. The young children of a divorced woman might return with her to her brother's house, but had the right to go back before puberty to their fathers' house.

In this system the husbands obtain both sexual and procreative rights in their wife, her children becoming members of their patrilineal group. The wife herself does not, however, as among Brahmans, become wholly incorporated as a member of her husband's lineage. A sonless widow whose husband left no brothers had no rights to property or maintenance by his family; she must return to her brother's house. She could not, as among Brahmans, adopt on behalf of her husband or temporarily manage his property in the absence of adult kinsmen. Though her children belong to the husband's group, the wife appears as in North Malabar to be only temporarily 'leased' by the husbands, on payments of the *kānam* sum, for her sexual and domestic services.

Moreover, though a woman cannot inherit property in her natal *taravād*, the bond between brother and sister remains strong. The eldest brother is early regarded as the guardian of his sisters, who observe partial avoidance and respect to him much as in a Nayar *taravād*. It is significant that at divorce, a woman is returned to her brother, not to her father or the headman of her patrilineal group. At the death of a married woman, her brothers and their children observe pollution in their own dwelling-group, assembling at the deceased's conjugal house on the sixteenth day for final rites to the spirit. At the death of a man, his sisters' sons have pollution, assemble at his house, and in the sixteen days of mourning perform offerings to the spirit immediately after the deceased's sons, and before his younger brothers and paternal grandchildren. At the death of a man, his sisters and daughters make offerings to an image of the deceased on the fourteenth day, but the widow herself (unlike the Brahman widow) takes no part in death rites. This shows the strong tie persisting between a Brahman woman and her natal group, and the comparative lack of integration into the group of the women who marry its men. The former existence of exogamous matrilineal clans underlines this persistence of the bond between women and their natal kinsfolk, especially their brothers.¹

The Tiyar Tali-Rite. A girl's *tali* was tied before puberty by a boy, usually a small child, of some local *taravād*, affinal or unrelated, into which the girl might marry. My informants in Cochin and Walluvanād could not remember the details of the rite, which has died out in the last twenty years. They knew that it must be done before puberty, and that the *tali*-tier sometimes married the girl after puberty by the usual ceremonies.

According to Thurston & Rangachari (1909, VII, pp. 80-1), who describe the rite in Chavakkad, between Calicut and Cochin, Anantha Krishna Iyer (1909-12, I, pp. 285-7) who describes it for Cochin, and Aiyappan (1944, pp. 159-60) for the whole central area, the horoscopes were compared as for a marriage. The artisans provided an arrow and a brass mirror which the girl carried in her hand, a plank of the milk-tree, the rouge-bottle which figures in the eight auspicious objects, and a staff carried by the bridegroom. The local *Pānan* (a low caste of sorcerers and menial workers) brought a peacock-feather umbrella for the girl and a 'war umbrella' for the boy. A week in advance, the carpenter planted the south-east corner-post of the shed at an auspicious moment. For three days before the rites, the girl was secluded as if she had menstruated. On the day before the rites, she was taken to worship the sun, and was seated in the marriage-hall on a plank with a lit lamp, a vessel of water, rice, plantain-fruits, and a coconut before her. Her mother's brother's wife parted her hair and placed a gold coin on her crown, and the Tandan's wife (like the barber in North Malabar) anointed this three times with oil, here poured from a leaf of the *jak* tree. The girl took a ceremonial bath and was secluded in the house with a casket, a bell-metal mirror, and a sword on a stool beside her.

¹ The tie between sisters is also close. They and their children observe pollution for each others' deaths, and the accorate (forbidden among Nayers and North Malabar Tiyars) sometimes confirms the status of the mother's sister as a proxy mother.

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vocal music, etc., goes on. One by one the guests soon depart, and the bridegroom stays in his wife's house for a few days. It must be remembered that the Nāyars are a strictly matrilineal community, though the custom shows a laxity in these days.

The *Sambandham* customs are not the same all over Malabar. They vary considerably in details, but the principle is the same all over. *Sambandham* in itself, though recognised as legal, has not the binding effect of a proper marriage. It is in theory dissoluble at will, and often it happens that, due either to misunderstanding or quarrel, either of the parties breaks off relations. In such a case, the marriage is deemed to have ended, and the aggrieved party can, without further formality, marry anybody else. The legal position is slightly altered in Travancore. By the Nāyar Regulation Act of 1912 it was enacted that if a man wants to break off his marriage relations with a woman to whom he was united by a properly conducted *Sambandham* he has to give her six months' notice and provide for the maintenance of her children by him (till they attain their twelfth year, unless the mother marries in the meantime). But this law has very little influence, and marriages and divorces go on in the same free fashion as before. In British Malabar, there is the Malabar Marriage Act of Sir C. Sankaran Nayar, the present Educational Member of the Imperial Government, by which a Nāyar entering into a *Sambandham* with a Nāyar woman can, if the parties choose to do so, register their union as a marriage to which ordinary marriage laws apply. This has been found very ineffective, for in the last twenty years during which it has been in force only six marriages have been registered, and all of them have been in the family of its distinguished author.

Before such laws came to be enacted (and to a very great extent even now) there has been singular freedom of marriage and divorce among the Nāyars. The men that a girl could possibly marry were strictly restricted by certain conditions. A Nāyar girl is not allowed to contract a marriage with men of a lower subcaste. She can marry either in her own subcaste or in castes above hers. She is not allowed to marry one who is not at least two years older than herself. She cannot marry anyone who shares pollution with her (that is descended from the same ancestress on the maternal side, however remote). There are cases when the common ancestress lived nearly four hundred years ago, but still her descendants are supposed to be so closely related in blood as to preclude matrimonial relationship of any sort.

The husband visits the wife's house after dinner, and this does not cause any particular inconvenience, as, till lately, marriage was restricted to people of one's own village or of its immediate neighbourhood. But in these days the tendency is strongly patrilineal, though ancient and aristocratic families still refuse to send their ladies out of the house. To keep within one's own house is considered to be a specially aristocratic privilege.

The question of polyandry among the Nāyars is a much debated point. This can be said with certainty: there has been no authenticated case of it at least for the last fifty years.

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184 six months," and a reply is given in the terms "Be it so". Thus, the permission of the senior lady of the bride's family is asked and given to the bridegroom to visit the bride for a period of six months.

[556] The young men of some aristocratic families who wish to perform *sambandham* have the brides brought to them on an auspicious day without any formal ceremony, and henceforth look upon them as their wives.

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[586] The union is generally effected with the mutual consent, but is terminable at the will of either party. Practically, a marriage thus effected is, in the majority of instances, found as happy and enduring as others more formal and ceremonial.

[581] The following is the account given by the late Mr. Chandu Menon of the ceremonies constituting the marriage among the Nayars of Malabar. It is quoted here, because it is a typical description which covers all forms of the union:—

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192 "Sambandham is the principal Malayalam word as *vivāham*
197 is in Sanskrit. Whatever may be the *sambandham*s of the *marumakkathiyam* Nayars, there can be no doubt that the idea which the word conveys to a Malayali is the same as the word *vivāham*. The generic term, *sambandham*, which, in South Malabar between Calicut and Nedunganad, and in Ponnani, Cochin, and parts of Travancore, is the old name to denote marriage includes—

1. *Guna dōsham* as used in South and North Malabar.
2. *Pudamuri* or its Sanskrit synonym for *Vastradānam* used in South Malabar.
3. *Uzhamporukkuka*, and *Vidāram Kairuga* of North Malabar.
4. The *Kidakkōra kalyānam* of Palghat and parts of Nedunganad.

Pudamuri, *Vastradānam*, *Uzhamporukkuka*, *Vidāram Kairuga* are local expressions hardly understood beyond the localities in which they are used, but there would hardly be a Malayali who would not really understand what is meant by *sambandham thudanguka* (to begin *sambandham*). The meaning of this phrase which means "to marry" is understood throughout the Keralam in the same way, and there cannot be any ambiguity about it.

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184 It is thus found, that *sambandham* is the principal word denoting marriage among the *marumakkathiyam* Nayars. It

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marumakkathdyam of its one great merit, viz., that in sexual matters it places the man and the woman on terms of equality giving equal freedom to both. With practical unanimity, the witnesses admitted that the man may turn away the woman, and that under the *marumakkathdyam* law, he is in no way responsible for the maintenance of the children whom he has begotten upon her. Further, the person that begot a child in a *marumakkathdyam* female was originally regarded as a casual visitor and the sexual relation depended for his continuance on mutual consent.¹

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The views expressed above are those of the landed aristocracy, and the rulers who were admittedly of the Nayar caste, as also those of the somewhat selfish class of the Nambuthiris, of Malabar, who, to gratify their selfish ends, quote chapter and verse of their own creation in support of the existing custom and teachings, which the Nayars of these days will never submit to. All or nearly all of them cling to one wife for life, and with them *sambandham* is the real marriage, *de facto* and *de jure*. This is the real state of affairs in the States of Cochin and Travancore as well as in British Malabar.

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The present and growing tendency in all cases, in which, a man, whether a Nambuthiri or a Nayar, consorts with a Nayar woman, is to look upon her as the true wife, and the children of such unions are looked upon as theirs and duly provided for, so far as their means permit. The statement is to a certain extent confirmed by Mr. Logan, who was the Collector of Malabar for many years and thus had ample opportunities of knowing a great deal of Malabar and its people. He says, "this part of Malabar has, in the hands of unenquiring commentators, brought much undeserved obloquy on the morality of the people. The fact, at any rate, of recent years, is that, although the theory of the law sanctions freedom in these relations, conjugal fidelity is very general. Nowhere is the marriage tie, albeit, informal, more rigidly observed or respected, nowhere is it more jealously guarded or its neglect more savagely avenged. Their very looseness of the law makes the individual observances closer, for people have been watchful over the things they are most liable to lose. The absence of a ceremonial has encouraged the popular impression, but a ceremonial,

1. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, pages 38 to 44.

like other conventionalities, is an accident, and the Nayar women are as chaste and faithful as their neighbours, just as they are as modest as their neighbours, although their national costume does not include some of the details required by conventional notions of modesty."¹ Nevertheless, the existing state of things in the community does not quite satisfy the sentiments of the educated public. There was a loud cry for reform and legislation in British Malabar. The Madras Government appointed a commission, which, after its protracted labours, enacted a permissive law, Act IV of 1896. The main provisions of the Bill are, that, when a *sambandham* has been registered, it shall have the incidence of a legal marriage; that is to say, the wife and children shall be entitled to maintenance by the husband or father respectively and to succeed to half his self-acquired property if he dies intestate, while the parties to such a *sambandham* cannot register a second one during its continuance. The law does not extend to this State. The fewness of the number of marriage registrations shows how little the Nayars, as a community, have availed themselves of it. The principal objections urged against it are: (1) that it ignores caste and customary restrictions on marriage and thereby interferes with caste; (2) that it sanctions what according to social usage is deemed to be incestuous marriage; (3) that marriage before the Registrar is obnoxious to the people, and that no one has any scruples about going through the customary form; (4) that the provisions relating to divorce are ill-adapted to the present state of society in Malabar, and that revelations of conjugal infidelity in public courts are the most repulsive to the people; (5) that the provisions relating to the giving of the whole of the self-acquired property to wives and children amount to violent interference with the customary law. The following extract from Moore's Malabar Law and Customs is well worth the perusal²:—

From the date on which the Act in Malabar came into force up to 31st March 1910, one hundred *sambandhams* have been registered. "In his last report of the working of the Act, the Registrar-General states, that the number of notices of

1. Logan's Manual of Malabar, Vol. I, page 136.

2. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, page 55.

Sivagothrakir (worshippers or followers of Siva), would seem to indicate that they reverence Siva more than Vishnu. 557
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"No people" says Elie Reclus, "have more fully appreciated the maternal family, nor developed it more logically than the Nayars, despite the [769]
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A Nayar tarawad or marumakkathayam family.

accumulated obstacles thrown in its way by a race admirably intelligent and moreover victorious."¹ The *tarawid* or *marumakkathayam* family consists in theory of all persons who can trace their descent in the female line from a single ancestress. In its simplest form it is one which consists of mother and her children, living together with their maternal uncle, that is the mother's brother, as *kdranavan* or the senior male member of the family. In its complex form it consists of a mother and all her children, both male and female, all her grandchildren by her daughters, all her brothers and sisters and the descendants on the sisters' side,—in short, all the relatives of the woman on the female side, however distant their relationship, living together in the same block of buildings, dining together in the same hall and enjoying all the property in common. No descendant through the male line can be a member of such a family. There are at present instances of families containing a hundred or more members who live in one or more buildings situated in a large compound and who are the descendants of one woman separated perhaps by generations of descent, and yet able to trace their common descent from one ancestress.

In such a family the woman senior to others in age was originally mistress or head of the family, and she reigned or governed. Her eldest daughter was prime minister in the family, and through her all orders were transmitted to her little world. The son recognised the priority of the mother before whom he did not even venture to seat himself, unless she had given him permission. The brother obeyed the elder sister, and respected the younger ones. In fact, the affection between brother and sister was a feeling that endured, while conjugal love was but a passing sentiment. The wives of brothers and sons held but a secondary position in the family. The Nayars loved their families more than anything else in the world, and made it the end of their existence. Like all Hindus they held reprehensible the man who [593]
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1. Primitive folk, page 159.

NAYAR

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595 realised, the women among the Nāyars not being
 [585] restricted to family or number, but, after she has been
 consecrated by the usual rites before the nuptial fire, in
 which ceremony any indifferent person may officiate
 as the representative of her husband, being in her
 intercourse with the other sex only restrained by her
 inclinations; provided that the male with whom she
 associates be of an equal or superior tribe. But it must
 be stated, for the glory of the female character, that,
 notwithstanding the latitude thus given to the Nāyattis,
 and that they are thus left to the guidance of their own
 free will and the play of their own fancy (which in other
 countries has not always been found the most efficient
 check on the conduct of either sex), it rarely happens
 that they cohabit with more than one person at the same
 586 time. Whenever the existing connexion is broken,
 whether from incompatibility of temper, disgust, caprice,
 or any of the thousand vexations by which from the
 frailty of nature domestic happiness is liable to be
 disturbed, the woman seeks another lover, the man
 581 another mistress. But it mostly happens that the bond
 of paternity is here, as elsewhere, too strong to be shaken
 off, and that the uninfluenced and uninterested union
 of love, when formed in youth, continues even in the
 decline of age."

595 In a note on the Nāyars in the sixteenth century,
 [20.] Cæsar Fredericke writes as follows.* "These Nairi
 having their wives common amongst themselves, and
 when any of them goe into the house of any of these
 women, he leaveth his sworde and target at the door,
 and the time that he is there, there dare not be any so

* The Voyage and Travell of M. Cæsar Fredericke, Merchant of Venice, into
 the East Indies and beyond the Indies (1563). Translation. Hakluyt Voyages,
 V, 394.

practice continued till recently. Hamilton and Buchanan⁵⁹⁵ say that, among the Nāyars of Malabar, a woman has several husbands, but these are not brothers. These travellers came to Malabar in the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. There is no reason whatever to suppose that they were not just recording what they saw. For I am not quite sure whether, even now, the practice is not lurking in some remote nooks and corners of the country." Lastly, Mr. Wigram writes as follows.* "Polyandry may now^[851] be said to be dead, and, although the issue of a Nayar marriage are still children of their mother rather than^[581] of their father, marriage may be defined as a contract based on mutual consent, and dissoluble at will. It has been well said (by Mr. Logan) that nowhere is the marriage tie, albeit informal, more rigidly observed or respected than it is in Malabar: nowhere is it more jealously guarded, or its neglect more savagely avenged."

In connection with the tāli-kattu kalyānam, or tāli-⁵⁸⁸ tying marriage, Mr. Fawcett writes that "the details of^[184] this ceremony vary in different parts of Malabar, but the^[881] ceremony in some form is essential, and must be performed for every Nayar girl before she attains puberty." For an account of this ceremony, I must resort, to the evidence of Mr. K. R. Krishna Menon before the Malabar Marriage Commission.†

"The tāli-kattu kalyānam is somewhat analogous to what a dēva-dāsi (dancing-girl) of other countries (districts) undergoes before she begins her profession. Among royal families, and those of certain Edaprabhus, a Kshatriya, and among the Charna sect a Nedungādi is

* Malabar Law and Custom, 1882.

† Report of the Malabar Marriage Commission, 1894.